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Assembling market b/orders: Violence, dispossession and economic development in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

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Abstract: Using an ongoing land conflict in Ciudad Juárez as a case-study, this paper seeks to show how maquiladora decision-makers stabilize a regional development model even at times of extreme social and economic crisis. I argue that the current killings associated with drug trafficking play an ambivalent role in the reproduction of order in Juárez. At first sight, the violence is represented as a threat, unmasking as it does a regional development model as failure. Decision-makers accordingly respond by doing everything possible to distance the maquiladora industry from the violence. On the one hand, this is being done by familiar means, not unlike in previous moments of crises. But on the other hand the events around Lomas del Poleo additionally assume a new quality, as maquiladorization goes hand in hand with an explicit strategy of spatial distanciation, integrating places and people that have hitherto only been linked marginally to the industry. And it is here that the narco-related violence plays different roles: as a convenient veil that allows what might be termed "ordinary" assertions of brute force to be used under the cover of extraordinary, excessive violence; and as a welcome excuse at moments of emergency that legitimize violent measures for the sake of a greater good.

Keywords: marketization, dispossession, modernization, Maquiladora, Mexico

1 City of the future? Murder city?

Ciudad Juárez is a Mexican border city which forms a binational agglomeration with neighboring El Paso, Texas. From 2008 until 2011 the city had the dubious privilege of belonging to the most violent places on earth. In 2010, the bloodiest year, there were almost 10 killings per day in a city of 1.2 or 1.3m people.[1]

In the local, national and international media this violence is generally represented as the result of a brutal war between drug cartels. This is a problematic oversimplification. Representations like these hide from view that the Mexican state at all spatial scales is deeply implicated in the violence. Víctor Quintana, scholar, activist and former member of the Chihuahua state congress, recently pointed to three interrelated moments of state failure: the failure of a self-declared war against organized crime in a climate of total impunity, not only for the criminal activities by drug cartels, but also for state-sponsored violence (see also Rodriguez Nieto, 2012, ch. 5); the extent to which government policies notoriously fail Mexico's youth; and the more general historical failure of the neoliberal model of economic and social development pursued since the early 1980s. To this I

[1] I refer to numbers compiled by Molly Molloy, a research librarian at the University of New Mexico, Las Cruces. According to this source there have been a total of 11,202 homicide deaths in Juárez from 2007 to 2012.

would add a fourth moment of "failure", namely that powerful political and economic elites have historically been able to shore off their development model by successfully shirking responsibility for the resulting social costs (Quintana 2010a, b; Wright 2012). The story I am going to tell in this paper can only be grasped in this wider political-economic context. This is a story where the different "state failures" intertwine in exemplary manner, not only to immunize the model of economic development that has made Ciudad Juárez the city it is today, but also to use the ongoing violence to give it further legitimacy.

The story starts with Foxconn. At around the same time when the "drug violence" started to get worldwide media attention, the Taiwanese original equipment manufacturer announced plans in the summer of 2008 to build a "megamaquiladora", that is a large assembly plant dedicated to the production of mobile phones, computers, laptops and servers for the likes of Nokia, Dell, Hewlett Packard and Apple (Romo, 2008). Located about 13 km west of the historical city center in a sparsely populated area known as San Jerónimo, the plant is projected to employ 30,000 workers after completion. This will create nothing less than the largest facility of this kind in the whole country.

Foxconn's decision coincided with the election of Ciudad Juárez as "North American City of the Future" in 2007/8. This award for the most investment-friendly cities in North America is regularly organized by FDi Magazine, a publication owned by the Financial Times Group. And from the perspective of industry representatives this verdict appears to be more than justified. An online maquiladora information platform recently celebrated 670m dollars foreign investment in the state of Chihuahua from October 2010 to October 2011. The lion's share of this investment was taken by Ciudad Juárez as global corporations such as Electrolux, Delphi or Visteon increased their local engagement (Maquila Portal, 2011).

City of the future? Murder city? It seems that these two representations address two completely different places. Establishing a strict separation between the orderly realm of a modern market economy and a world of chaos and terror, representations like these allow the stabilization of a development model based on the idea of export-oriented industrialization. They hide from view the deeply contradictory, mundane practices that translate this development model into concrete realities. And you do not have to venture far away from the Foxconn installations to catch a glimpse of this.

Located about 10 km east from the Foxconn complex, Lomas del Poleo is a *colonia* on the far-western edge of Ciudad Juárez. In the early 2000s the neighborhood suddenly found itself in the midst of a land dispute. When developers and politicians on both sides of the border started to promote binational economic and residential development, the people of Lomas del Poleo suddenly lived on a prime piece of real estate.

Settlement in the area dates from the early 1970s. When about 150 families peacefully settled the upper parts of Lomas del Poleo, they did so assuming that the lands were public property of the Mexican nation. Over of the years the community grew steadily, finally encompassing a total of 250 families. Electricity was installed and regularly paid for, a primary school, a kindergarten and a chapel were built. Residents possess voting cards and other documents which prove that they have lived in Lomas del Poleo for decades (Muñoz Ramírez, 2011; North American Human Rights Delegation, 2008).

The situation escalated when the wealthy and powerful Zaragoza family claimed ownership of the land. The Zaragozas base their claim to ownership on a dubious title dating from the 1960s. Based on that document a federal court voted in favor of a complaint in 2002 and authorized the removal of local resident's fences and power lines. When the people of Lomas del Poleo resisted, the Zaragozas started to terrorize the community. The most far-reaching incident took place in March 2004. Approximately 200 private security guards arrived and erected a barbed wire fence around the houses, anchored by white cement posts and including watchtowers.

Likened to a "concentration camp" in the national press (Dávila, 2008; Muñoz Ramírez, 2011), the neighborhood continues to be fenced and under constant surveillance today. In the years following the violent enclosure, the climate of violence, terror and intimidation intensified. Approximately 40 houses were demolished or burned, a man, Luis Alberto Guerrero, was beaten to death by Zaragoza guards, and two children were killed in a suspicious house fire. Many families left in the face of these violent acts, some of them accepting the offer to relocate to a stretch of land on the eastern edge of Lomas del Poleo, "donated" by the Zaragoza Family (Welsome, 2007).

There has never been a final verdict of who holds the title of the land in question and where public land ends and private property starts. Under Mexican law this issue can only be resolved by the Institute of Agrarian Reform. Normally, Lomas del Poleo residents should have a good probability of obtaining title for the land. Although this is not directly specified in the famous article 27 of the Mexican Constitution and therefore

highly arbitrary it is a common practice in Mexico to formalize ownership after a certain period of undisputed settlement. Until a final verdict is reached, however, the disputed stretch of land is technically considered as being "under litigation", that is, no party can lay claim on it.

What seems to happen is that given the complexity of the case and the economic stakes involved government and judicial authorities simply let the process drag on, prolonging it with all sorts of conditions and requests. This creates a situation of uncertainty that is exploited by the Zaragoza Family. And time is on the side of the Zaragozas. By the end of 2011 only 13 families continued to live in the neighborhood, five of them inside the gated compound, and eight families who struggle to survive across the new highway built to connect San Jerónimo with Juárez, constantly watched by patrolling guards on horseback or in cars (Muñoz Ramírez, 2011, *Jim 2011*).

These developments have been going on almost unnoticed. All media attention is turned to the ongoing excessive violence in Ciudad Juárez. An increasingly powerful global narrative of a "murder city" (Bowden, 2010) emerges that appears to threaten a profitable economic development model that depends on promises of progress and modernization. In what follows, I seek to show how maquila decision-makers are able to stabilize this model even at times of extreme social and economic crisis. I argue that the killings associated with drug trafficking play an ambivalent role in the reproduction of order in Juárez. At first sight, the narco violence is a threat, unmasking as it does a regional development model as failure. Decision-makers accordingly respond by doing everything possible to distance the maquiladora industry from the violence. On the one hand, this is being done by familiar means, not unlike in previous moments of crises. This has been documented earlier, for instance, in the work of Melissa Wright who has shown how the maquila industry reinvented Juárez as a technically more advanced, value-adding city in the 1990s. And how this restructuring necessarily required the reproduction of the old, backward city, a process that she interpreted as working primarily through the continuous representation of Mexican women as "untrainable" and "disposable" (e.g. Wright 2001). But on the other hand the events around Lomas del Poleo additionally display new qualities, as maquiladorization goes hand in hand with an explicit strategy of spatial distanciation, integrating places and people that have hitherto only been linked marginally to the industry. And it is here that the narco-related violence plays different roles: as a convenient veil that allows what might be termed "ordinary" assertions of brute force

(ordinary because violent dispossession is a common occurrence in Juárez; see Acosta Beltrán, 2009) to be used under the cover of extraordinary, excessive violence; and as a welcome excuse at moments of emergency that legitimize violent measures for the sake of a greater good.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. After laying some conceptual ground in section 2, I analyze the violence around Lomas del Poleo as a specific manifestation of two modes of what I refer to as "economization by maquiladorization". This concerns two interrelated moments of a framing process that has produced Ciudad Juárez as an advanced node in global production systems in various ways since the inception of the maquiladora program in the mid-1960s: The articulation of the city with increasingly global supply chains on the one hand (section 3), and a parallel and necessary moment of disarticulation that separates a modern economic entity from its backward and value-less surroundings on the other (section 4). Stressing the performative qualities of these dis/articulations, I conclude with a more differentiated account of the processes at work. I do this by pointing to the hidden connections necessary for dis/articulation to assume quasi-natural force, overflowings that both make economic entities possible and threaten their stability at the same time.

Let me add two notes. The first concerns my understanding of the role of everyday people in the processes I analyze – as residents of Lomas del Poleo and Ciudad Juárez, as maquila workers or as labor migrants. I have no intention to overplay the power of capital or the state. When I refer to how certain neoliberal imaginations of market and economy are taken for granted, I take this to mean – following Hall et al. (2013: 17) – a process of sedimentation into a popular common sense which sets the parameters of what can and cannot be said in public debate. In saying this I do not want to downplay people's agency and ability to resist. As I will show below there is ample evidence of protest and resistance in Ciudad Juárez. Yet at the same time, Mexico's elites, supported by journalists, politicians and corporate interests, appear to be winning what Melissa Wright – following Quintana – has recently called "wars of interpretation" about what is going on in the city. I write this article fully aware of these complexities with the intention to paint a different picture than the one dominating much of public discourse.

The second note refers to the empirical material informing this paper. I develop my argument based on a longer-term engagement with the city, and plants and workers going back to the late 1990s. The material collected during repeated periods of research al-

lows me to put current events into a wider context. I do this by referring to interviews with managers, workers, industry representatives, real estate developers, and labor rights activists on both sides of the political border (1999-2003; 2006; 2011), non-participatory observations in two maquiladora plants (1999-2003; 2006) and a wealth of secondary sources such as the business press, newspapers, company publications, and material from NGOs and labor organizations. The names of the interviewees have been anonymized, and context information about the interviewees is given at the end of the paper.

2 Geographies of marketization: B/ordering the economy

From the perspective informing this paper, "the capitalist economy" is neither a thing and separate ontological realm nor simply a social construction independent from "the reality" it seeks to represent. It is a naturalized effect of the division between a fortified territory of market exchange, instrumental rationality, value, scarcity, individual property, and the hinterlands of gifts, social and cultural norms, values, abundance, and collectivist land use. The problem with such a naturalization of the "the economy" is that a certain understanding of its essentials is being taken as granted by academic economists, economic practitioners (e.g. consultants, accountants) and what is commonly referred to as lay people. In such an environment dissenting voices and alternative projects have enormous problems in getting themselves heard.

An important aspect of modernist thinking about the capitalist economy concerns the close connection with linear time, that is, the idea that a progressive and dynamic economic core, dominated by private property relations, is confronted with traditional and "deviant" activities often linked to backward cultural and social conditions (see Werner, 2011). Accordingly, deviant practices are considered as something residual, somehow laying outside and being variably considered as pockets of resistance or areas in transition to be conquered by capitalism. In the words of Timothy Mitchell (2007: 246): "the idea persists that the market, indeed capitalism in general, has a boundary". This imaginary boundary separates the modern from the backward, the urban from the rural, or the north from the south, usually bringing with it sharp exclusionary effects.

What appears as a clearly demarcated outside of a bounded terrain (market, capitalism), however, is in fact a constituent part of the inside. Mitchell (2007) refers to this rugged terrain as a zone of "inclusive exclusion", "since what is declared to be outside the mar-

ket already plays a role within it, through the declaration of exclusion and the continuous battles over its inclusion". In this "zone of not yet" that demarcates the market frontier (Tsing, 2005: 28) the non-economic or non-market plays the role of a stranger inside the gate, "the other" that is neither fully inside nor outside. In so doing, an appearance of a strict separation of entities and realms is produced which in fact are closely connected. Either side emerges as the mirror-image of the other, the modern economy being everything the outside is not.

But how are these arrangements brought into being, how are they stabilized and reproduced? The boundary zone between the modern economy and its other is a performative effect of the work of heterogeneous networks that assemble diverse actors. This insight is nicely captured by the term socio-technical agencement, that is, arrangements of people, things and socio-technical devices that format products, prices, competition, places of exchange and mechanisms of control. From this perspective, the focus cannot be on economic entities as something pre-given but rather on economization, that is, the processes which see to it that actions, devices and representations are assembled and qualified as "economic" (Çalışkan and Callon, 2010). These framings work through routinely enacted ties under conditions of asymmetric power relations.

It is in two ways that this understanding of economization and marketization connects with the notion of disarticulation as laid out recently by Jennifer Bair and Marion Werner. On the one hand it shares the insight that economization is never applied universally, market forces being always imposed on some but not others (Hall et al. 2013: 14). By conceptualizing economization as inherently dis/articulated and fragmented, attention is directed to the everyday practices of value creation, devaluation and exclusion that reproduce the uneven geographies of global capitalism (Bair and Werner, 2011; Gidwani and Reddy, 2011). These processes always involve a paradoxical double movement of articulation – the conjunctural connections of commodities, people and places – and disarticulations – complex processes of separation and exclusion – that constitute circuits of commodity production. People, things and places are literally moved in and out of such circuits, often creating unstable "borderlands" between non/market relations produced, in part, through struggles over redistribution and control.

On the other hand it is crucial from an economization perspective not to reduce the processes described above to an overarching singular and omnipotent logic of the market. Any agencement of heterogeneous elements giving shape to particular manifestations of

economization is always a precarious, instable accomplishment. It assume form as a ruptured "unity in difference" which works through multifaceted hierarchies of social difference and othering. This emphasis on the practical "how" of market expansion is crucial. As any other performative process, economization and marketization are never complete, breakdown and failure being as much constitutive of performances as construction and stabilization (Butler, 2010). This is why interested agents – political decision-makers, business representatives –, caught in the disciplinary webs of global production systems and markets, regularly behave in contradictory ways often jeopardizing the development model they seek to stabilize and reproduce. It is the impossibility to fully contain and prevent overflowing that necessitates measures to hide and veil and it is these contradictions in turn that provide opportunities for alternative projects. Geography is an indispensable part of this process. For it is the materialization of economic and social differences in the form of the spatial border which completes the translation work. Territorialization is an indispensable element of the production of economy-inside and -outside. Together with Marc Boeckler I have elsewhere proposed a particular geographical translation of these arguments, connecting them with a reconfigured notion of spatial borders (Berndt and Boeckler, 2011, 2012). Our argument is that the global movements of capital, goods, people and ideas always involve an ambivalent double play of de-bordering *and* bordering processes. These ambivalent border regimes are a necessary condition for the construction of global markets and production systems. Yet, in order for these to work, these ambivalences have to remain hidden and veiled. In what follows, I apply this perspective to the case of Ciudad Juárez, starting with the production of the city as an advancing site in the circuits of global commodity production.

3 The dream of progress and development: Maquiladora industry and ciudad maquiladora

The first moment of maquiladorization relates to the formation of entities out of a wide array of elements, people, things, ideas, and technologies. In the context of Juárez this concerns the invention of a new industry – the "maquiladora industry" (MI). The MI is a product of a specific binational export-import regime dating back to the mid-1960s that enabled plants located along the northern Mexican border to temporarily import tax-free supplies, parts, machinery, equipment and foreign technical personnel in order to

produce goods or services, and re-export them to the U.S. (Carrillo and Hualde, 1998: 81).

Being considered the birthplace of the maquiladora program (see Bermúdez, 1966; Schmidt, 1998) Ciudad Juárez can be regarded as an early laboratory for the ideas with which the neoliberal global economy realizes itself: Liberalization, free trade, free movement of goods – all translated into a development model: export-oriented industrialization. In sum, in the context of the Mexican border economization means "maquiladorization" (Kopinak, 1993) and the key symbolic entities of this process are maquila plants, industrial parks, export processing zones and binational development projects.

Export-oriented industrialization, free trade and binational development

During the mid-2000s San Jerónimo became the center of an ambitious binational economic development project. Reiterating a powerful script which has been used to capture the public imagination at the border since the early days of the MI, developers, entrepreneurs and government officials promised yet another binational twin city (*ciudad gemela*) comprised of the municipalities of Santa Teresa and Sunland Park in New Mexico, and San Jerónimo, Chihuahua.

On the Mexican side the mastermind behind the project is Eloy Vallina, a controversial entrepreneur and developer from the state capital Ciudad de Chihuahua. Four years after the inception of NAFTA and at a time when the MI boomed unprecedentedly, Vallina acquired about 20,000 hectares of land at the border to New Mexico. Soon afterwards he started to promote his vision of a new binational border city "San Jerónimo-Santa Teresa". Quickly nicknamed "Ciudad Vallina", the ambitious plan projected a total number of 140 maquila plants and a population of 535,000 on the Mexican side until the year 2020, the latter mainly providing the workforce for these plants (Gutiérrez, 2006).

Vallina's counterpart north of the border has been Bill Sanders, a wealthy real estate mogul who returned to his hometown El Paso towards the end of his working career. Sanders formed Verde Realty in 2003 and purchased more than 8,000 hectares of land in Santa Teresa. Surrounding the Santa Teresa International Port of Entry, the property is strategically located to profit from offshore-related growth on the Mexican side. In a post-9/11 world, Sanders speculated, cross-border trade has become more complicated, providing a niche for a region that "was not quite the United States and not quite Mexico,

but a savvy hybrid that could take advantage of the rules – and lack of rules – in both countries" (Welsome, 2007: 17; *Xavier, 2011*).

Initial resistance against the ambitious project was overcome when the political landscape changed favorably in the mid-2000s, allowing government authorities to invest heavily into the infrastructure. In Mexico three east-west roads were extended or newly built, connecting downtown Juárez with San Jerónimo and the Santa Teresa Port of Entry. Strategically located only a stone's-throw from the international border, Foxconn is the main beneficiary of these public investments. US authorities assisted by expanding the small Santa Teresa Port of Entry, investing in transport and logistics infrastructure. Most importantly, two foreign trade zones which "face and touch each other at the border" (a local business consultant cited in Welsome, 2007: 18) provide the regulatory frame for the effortless cross border movement of finished goods and inputs. They carve out territorial enclaves that technically do not belong to the nation-state, in so doing producing the kind of "savvy hybrid" mentioned above.

The regional history of export-oriented industrialization is littered with binational imaginations and development projects like those currently underway on the western edge of the city. Today's attempts to provide a new "spatial fix", that is, aggressive geographical expansion into exurban areas as a temporary solution to the contradictions of maquiladorization (Harvey, 1982: xvii), arguably assumes a particular quality, reminiscent perhaps of the early days of the industry, when the maquilas emerged on former cotton fields spatially separated from the historical city center during the 1960s and 1970s.

This interpretation is further supported by more recent developments in the Valle de Juárez towards the southeast of the city. In July 2011 local politicians from both sides of the border broke ground for the new Tornillo-Guadalupe international port of entry. On the US side, the project is expected to be one of the largest border-crossing facility nationwide, promising new economic development opportunities (US Customs and Border Protection, 2011). Only four months later, the Juárez City Council gave green light for an ambitious urban development project in San Agustín which aims to transform the small town in the Valle de Juárez into a new industrial and residential hub along the border. Echoing developments in San Jerónimo, the designated development zone sits right next to the new border crossing. In a further parallel, there have been reports recently of growing violence in the Juárez Valley aiming to drive unwanted residents away. Once

more all too readily attributed in the media to "competing criminal groups" the incidents coincide with growing criticism of the development project given the stretched municipal resources (Martínez-Cabrera, 2011; Washington Valdez, 2011, *John 2011*; *Xavier 2011*).

Maquiladora generations and the corporate family

I argued at the beginning that not all is "new" during the current reproduction of the maquiladora model. Development discourses around San Jerónimo cite scripts that are very familiar to those who have followed the city's transformation during the last decades. An important repeated narrative in this context concerns the idea of the evolution of the maquiladora plants and the city in stages.

Throughout the history of the industry academic scholars, economic practitioners and politicians alike have relied on model plants as symbols for a continuing process of linear modernization. In the context of Santa Teresa-San Jerónimo this role is being played by Foxconn. Ever since announcing the decision to invest in San Jerónimo and all the more since commencing production in the spring of 2009, Foxconn has played the role of a "flagship investor". In the local media Foxconn has become nothing less then a beacon of progress, rising "from the desert floor like an industrial oasis in a sea of sand and cactus", as an El Paso business paper put it almost lyrically (Roberts, 2010).

Looking at Ciudad Juárez as a whole, the local media celebrated recent investment decisions by companies such as Electrolux or Delphi as a proof for the city's continued attractiveness and ability to grow after years of economic crisis (MexicoNow, 2011: 8). In a similar statement in the wake of the opening of the Foxconn plant José Reyes Ferriz, the then mayor of Juarez (2007-2010), saw Juárez on the brink of doing "the next step in a model of industrial development in which the city has been a pioneer" (Nájera, 2008; my translation). Other commentators reiterate this script. Business consultants comment positively that the maquilas have risen to the Chinese challenge, repeatedly referring to how the plants and the whole city have moved up the supply chain (Buie, 2008, Foreign Direct Investment, 2010).

Representations such as the one cited above echo a three-generation-model popularized by the Mexican economist Jorge Carrillo in the 1990s (Carrillo and Hualde, 1998). According to this stylized narrative the MI started in the 1960s and 1970s with a first generation of "manual labor intensive" companies whose competitiveness rested in low sal-

aries and intensification of labor. From the early 1980s onwards a second generation emerged, so-called "rationalization of manual labor" companies with a higher level of technology and automation and, centrally, with a focus on the improvements of quality standards and on the reduction of dead time and inventory. The third generation of "highly competent skilled labor" companies arrived in the wake of NAFTA, according to the authors focusing on design, research and development. More recently, Carrillo added a fourth generation engaged with the IT-assisted coordination of manufacturing, research, purchasing and services (Carrillo and Lara, 2005). Each "generation" had its signature maquiladora. It is possible to trace a line from the famous RCA plant, the "prototipo 'moderno' de las maquilas venideras" (Martínez, 1978: 35) in the 1960s and 1970s, and Philips and Siemens in the 1980s and 1990s, to Delphi's technical center, the Electrolux complex and the Foxconn campus as representatives of today's illustrious fourth generation.

The generation model has been criticized for its linear thinking and for the reliance on a small number of showcase examples as proof for the latest round of upgrading. This criticism notwithstanding, however, it is the sheer power of this simple model and its accompanying promise of linear progress that is interesting for the purpose of this paper. The historization and sequencing necessary for the modernization narrative to acquire its force has been repeated time and time again in the recent history of the city. Idealized descriptions like these typically are quickly taken up by policy-makers and other interested parties. When the media, business consultants or politicians mobilize imaginations, qualifications regarding the idealized character of the generation model are quickly left behind.

It would be shortsighted to prematurely dismiss this narrative as being unrealistic and purely ideological. The modernization narrative provides a powerful script both for maquila decision-makers and workers. As members of a binational elite, the former often identify firmly with their role as missionaries of modern production in a backward setting. For maquila workers activated as flexible subjects of the "new Mexican working culture" (Reygadas, 2002) it blurs the line between self-identification and self-exploitation. In practice, this is achieved with the help of calculative devices which value and qualify employees with the aim of unfolding certain, desirable working capabilities. Sociotechnologies such as Human Resource Management are combined with Supply Chain Management, allowing the coupling of workers and production chains.

Having acquired hegemony in the course of the decades, this narrative is easily used to rationalize irritations and contradictions. For instance, whenever the city's maquiladoras are hit by crises and downturns in the US and other key markets, regular massive lay-offs of workers are given a positive twist. They are represented as a necessary consequence of the move from simple assembly and manufacturing work towards more knowledge-intensive tasks which goes along with a smaller regular workforce. The gradual "masculinization" of maquiladora employment, from almost exclusively female towards more evenly balanced workforces, is similarly explained with the modernization of the industry, hiding from view that recruitment decisions have more to do with deep-seated stereotypes regarding female labor than with technological improvement. Repeated representations like these create the effects they are naming, local and regional decision-makers seeing to it that the idea of a progressing, advancing industry becomes self-evident. By performing the imagination of continuous improvement, problems such as the recent economic crisis can be turned into temporary set-backs and necessary corrections en route to development.

4 The production of the other Juárez

Analyses of processes of economization remain incomplete without consideration of the second moment, that is, the insight that the framing of progressing modern entities is only complete with an identification and active production of that which remains outside. The state at different spatial scales is deeply implicated in the disconnection of people and places from the modernizing project of maquiladorization. Members of the regional elites again and again repeat the narrative of a modern *ciudad maquiladora* exerting itself against the *ciudad del vicio* (city of vice) associated with violence, prostitution and drugs (Berndt, 2004). And violent acts of dispossession and exclusion are made possible in the climate of pervasive impunity characterizing not only Ciudad Juárez but the whole country.

B/ordering Lomas del Poleo

For local critics in Mexico, Plan San Jerónimo constitutes a violent rupture in the urban landscape (Acosta Beltrán, 2009: 125). In order for maquiladorization to have this effect, it is crucial to have a "benchmark", an understanding of the alternative. What is needed is an idea of the backward, the non- or wrongly-developed. A clear line has to be drawn,

dividing the inside of such a modernizing project from its outside. Constituted and performed socially, this boundary is particularly effective, if it materializes spatially, and if it has a linear temporal quality. In the context of Lomas del Poleo these borderings assume three inter-related forms:

First, in the collective regional memory Lomas del Poleo has always been a non-place, a no man's land of little economic value which is associated with clandestine activities and violence. It has been nicknamed "narco ranch", because the Juárez cartel apparently used it as a landing base for its drug planes. And it became one of the most notorious sites connected with the *feminicidios*, the widely-documented mass murder of women, after the mutilated bodies of eight women appeared among the sand dunes in the late 1990s (Báez *et al.*, 2010: 69; Welsome, 2007: 6). When I interviewed a Foxconn Human Resource Manager and asked him about Lomas this was precisely the imagination that was conjured up: Sitting in his office which is only a couple of miles away, his first response was to associate the place with the murders of women, a dangerous place to be avoided as much as possible. When I probed further and asked about recent developments, he added that he was not aware of any recent incidents of violence in Lomas del Poleo (*Pablo, 2011*).

Representations like these stabilize the imagination of Lomas as a place of little or no value, in so doing erasing a rich history of social life stretching over more than three decades, with residents raising chickens and other animals, planting vegetables and fruits, running small grocery stores, going to church, and so on. It is against the cleansed imagination of an empty, lawless and useless land, of course, that the development plans codified in Plan San Jerónimo and the notions of progress and modernization assume their particular force.

Second, those devaluing representations directly connect with a downgrading of the people living in the neighborhood. Citing a well-known script in narratives of modernization and progress, people's social worth is connected with geographical mobility/stability. Accordingly, one member of the Zaragoza family referred to the residents as "Mexicans from the southern part of the country" (negating the fact that most residents are from the wider Juárez region), and *"paracaidistas"* (parachuters) who took the land illegally (cited in Welsome, 2007: 5).

Residents who have often lived in Lomas del Poleo for decades turn into recently arrived migrants who are treated with suspicion and regarded as morally inferior. In the con-

temporary public opinion along the northern Mexican border, migrants from southern parts of the country (i.e. Oaxaca, Chiapas, Veracruz) are blamed for all social ills in cosmopolitan border cities. They are represented as lacking loyalty, as being utterly unreliable and prone to illegal and clandestine activities. According to this discourse, their way to establish a temporary presence is by squatting land.

If you are only in Lomas temporarily, another strand of this discourse claims, if you are involved in illegal activities you are guilty of wasting a valuable development resource. "Well, what are the people's plans? What are they gonna do with the land?", this is how Jim, a US priest and activist recalls a question from the audience at a public meeting in neighboring El Paso, Texas. Jim is an outspoken opponent of the San Jerónimo plan who worked in the community and has been expelled by Mexican authorities after taking sides with the residents. In the interview he concluded that statements like these fortify the opinion that "development is good for everybody and if you're on a land and don't have a plan, you just get off of it and get out of the way and let the developer go about his business" (*Jim, 2011*). This is echoed by the residents themselves who accused powerful economic interests of turning them into "throwaway human beings". This sentiment echoes both the wide-spread equation of non-value with disposability in Juárez, and the corresponding obsession with waste and slack inside the maquila plants (Wright, 2006; Berndt, 2004 38-45).

The third means with which powerful economic interests draw a border between modern and backward connects with the local and national state. Immediately after the violent fencing, the aggressors put up a sign reading *"propriedad privada"* (private property). In so doing, the Zaragoza family not only manifested its right to the land. The sign is also a marker against a state which appears to be unable to secure and protect private property rights, legitimating the actions taken:

"Que con calidad de propietarios se tiene el derecho de establecer medidas de protección que salvaguarden la propiedad" (= As owners we maintain the right to adopt measures to protect the property; Pedro Zaragoza in a letter to the editor of the national magazine Proceso; Zaragoza Fuentes, 2008: 80).

This view is shared by other members of the regional economic elite, who also justify the "proactive" approach taken:

"And what has happened is, through the years people have started squatting there. And the authorities have not been able, or have not been willing, to do something about it. So the Zaragozas sort of have taken little bit of, you know, initiative, proactive approach in protecting their land" (*Xavier 2011*).

If approached from the perspective of the business community on the US-side, this narrative provides a useful excuse to turn a blind eye to violence and dispossession. Lomas del Poleo is reduced to yet another of the many land disputes which are believed to be a common occurrence in Mexico: "It's a Mexican issue", "There is a tradition of squatting in the poniente [western part of Juarez]" (*Tom, 2011*) – "There is quite a problem with property rights in Mexico"; "In Mexico it is still that way" (*John, 2011*) – "With the layers of political intrigue, profiteering, hidden interests and behind-the-scenes deals associated with Lomas del Poleo, it's difficult for a foreigner to understand what is really happening" (Pacheco, 2008).

In the light of these representations and the violence legitimized by them, Lomas del Poleo can be regarded as a graphic example of what David Harvey and others have referred to as "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2005: 69-72). For this is the blunt message of these representations: There is a stretch of land of little economic use, inhabited by disposable people who have little economic value to add and who therefore have no legitimate claim on land they lived on for decades. These devaluations make the need for development all the more pressing and serve as a justification of modernization by violent means. Those elements that resist and stand in the way have to be marked clearly and driven away.

B/ordering Juárez

To a large extent these violent b/orderings are nothing exceptional. They speak about processes of othering deeply engrained in what may be termed modernization by maquiladorization, demonstrating how economic development requires the reproduction of the other Juárez, "marked by poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and unskilled, low-waged laborers" (Wright, 2001: 94). In the history of maquiladorization two particular embodiments of the unskilled worker stand out. The first "proximate stranger" is a woman with many faces: The independent minded woman, the woman enjoying herself, the single mother. Represented as following the wrong path towards modernity, these women are regarded as lacking the discipline required to advance in the workplace. In the macho discourse omnipresent in the maquilas, it is only these women who fall victim to the violence against women in the city. And, according to this logic, it is mostly their own fault. Perceived as a threat to the fine-tuned production process, plant managers are constantly on alert, looking for "unruly" women who pose a risk for production. And

there is no lack of evidence that this continues until today. In a recent interview a manager of a firm providing locational advice, supply chain management services, and also production services to the maquila industry explains how the border between docile and unruly is performed on the female body:

> For instance they [Wal-mart] got upset with us, because we do pregnancy tests on the ladies. [...] But what happens in Mexico, let's say you're starting a production line, and if you put a girl on that line that's pregnant, when she reaches a certain period in her pregnancy, she takes off work (*John, 2011*).

The second stranger is the migrant. In a direct connection with representations of Lomas residents, migrant workers have always been treated with suspicion in the maquiladora city. Inside the plants it is mainly those migrants who embody the border between the modern and the backward, personnel managers preferring workers who were born in Juárez or have spent a considerable part of their lives there (Berndt 2003: 278-279).

Obviously intersecting in multiple combinations, these are typical examples for "othering": The exclusion of the permanently enclosed other who is excluded from the myth of the modern, first world Juárez, but at the same time constitutes it through his/her otherness.

The embodiments of a backward or at least wrongly modernized Mexico apparently go against the grain of the stable and well-ordered world required for global just-in-time production. It is the work of various practitioners of economic disciplines such as logistics, supply chain management or human resource management that intervenes in these processes. By constituting an apparent border between a world of modern commodity production and consumption and a backward world of informal, unproductive and illegal economic activities, "economists in the wild" (e.g. maquila managers, developers, business consultants) fundamentally "reorganize how people live, the political claims they can make, and the assets they can control" (Mitchell, 2007: 248).

Yet at the same time it is crucial to maintain the possibility of movement between both worlds. On the one hand there must be those who squander their right to be inside. Whenever something goes wrong in the plants, it is explained by the deficiencies of the workers. This provides easy justification for lay-offs and also sheds a different light on the notoriously high labor turnover rates in maquila plants. At times of insecurity, economic or otherwise, these workers perform the role of a buffer allowing the maquilas to adjust workforces flexibly. They are also believed to fill the ranks of the booming tempo-

rary labor industry in Juárez. On the other hand there has to be the possibility to move inside. Maquilas normally have core workforces which are quite stable. These are comprised of the "good" workers, docile and eager to learn, earning their place in the maquila family.

The borders separating wheat from chaff in the maquila plant are performative in the double sense of the word. They perform identities and they are performed by those who are subjected to the discourse of modernization. Lacking better alternatives, workers often readily accept a seductive script. In their own self-representations they distance themselves from the family outsiders, identifying with the norms which make good workers on the maquila shopfloor (Sánchez and Ravelo, 2010).

It is with the material infrastructure and associated ritualized practices that the separation of factory inside and outside is completed. Fortified gate, private security guard, ritualized inspection of passports and business visas, cameras, meticulous collection of data (name, company, purpose of visit, time of entry, time of exit), the hiding from view of production units – the modern maquila plant turns into a bounded spatial entity that encloses a "to-be-homogenized" group of heterogeneous people. This is achieved with the promise of offering "more than a place to work" to those who have earned the right to be part of the maquila family (Méndez, 2010).

In the current moment, these familiar processes of (re)stabilization occur in an environment of violence which is perceived as being extreme and as a threat to the carefully crafted image of Ciudad Juárez as a city of investment opportunities. This is why representatives of the business community on both sides of the border do everything to distance their industry from the violence. In the context of the ongoing violence San Jerónimo emerges as a safe haven:

> "We are interested in San Jerónimo as a company because, let's face it, it's not Juárez. And let's say a company comes and, you know, 'We hear you, we believe your passion, but we still don't want to be in Juárez, we don't want our executives travelling to Juárez.' We go 'Okay, well, we'll put the plant in San Jerónimo and your executives can drive across the border in a controlled zone in five minutes and drive back again'. It creates diversity options for us" (*John, 2011*).

"Making sense from a security point of view" (*Alejandro, 2011*), San Jerónimo took off at the same time as Ciudad Juárez itself began to drown in chaos and terror. If one looks at the logic informing representations of current developments around San Jerónimo/Santa Teresa it is the joint promise of cross-border mobility and disentanglement

from everything problematic about Juárez and Mexico. The streets, electricity cables, telecommunication lines and factories that have sprung up on both sides of the border allow the cross-border movements of goods, people and capital to bypass the troubled city. The project can therefore also be read as an attempt to distance the maquiladora model from the violence.

According to this logic, you are able to do business as usual in Juárez, as long as you stay away from the other Juárez. "They may have had an American passport, but they were killed at two-thirty in the morning and it was in a back alley of a strip club and there was a gun-fight" (*John, 2011*); and as long as you stay within the binational comfort zone available to everybody who has the right passport or a border crossing permit: "I spend the night in the closest safe and secure place possible – in this case, El Paso – and commute over the border daily" (the managing director of a US business service firm; Thompson, 2011) – "My social and professional circles are almost completely isolated from the violence" (the CEO of a Mexican American software service firm; Barrett, 2009). So successful is the discursive separation from the current wave of violence that nothing appears to be able to taint the purified image. These imaginations are naturalized, can no longer be questioned and provide a veil for other forms of violence that have assumed a sadly quotidian quality in the city. This concerns the ongoing *feminicidio* as much as the violent dispossessions currently occurring in Lomas del Poleo or in the Valle de Juárez. And this extends to the more general devaluation and downgrading of people and places along gender and ethnic lines. As I have argued above, in the case of Lomas del Poleo violence is represented as an ultimate, but legitimate means, a collateral in a struggle towards a greater good.

Entangling the disentangled? Overflow, protest and resistance

As successful as the discursive separation of the advanced, progressing city from its other may be, the bordering and purification work by the political and economic elites ultimately remains incomplete and instable. It is not difficult to see how "city of the future" and "murder city" are deeply entangled. For instance, there are obvious links between maquiladorization and the drug trade. To start with, there is the simple fact that both the legal and illegal cross-border movement of goods and money depend on the same infrastructure. As much as political authorities in the US hold up the image of a high-tech smart border, capable of sorting the wheat from chaff of cross-border traffic, the tech-

nical infrastructure stabilizing an asymmetric regional integration project offers perfect conditions for the clandestine movement of goods (drugs, contraband), people ("illegal" migration) and capital. Accordingly, there are various ways in which the maquila infrastructure is used to this end by the drug cartels. These range from corrupting truck drivers and gaining access to shipping departments inside the plants, to buying or setting up maquila plants which provide records of legitimate transactions. In the Mexican media the similarities between illegal and formal economy are nicely captured with the term "narcomaquiladora", which aptly represents the production and distribution of drugs as an industrial activity that stretches beyond political borders (Gómez and Cedillo, 2010). With a view to social life and the pervasive violence in the city maquiladorization has perverse effects. Promising development it tears the social fabric of the city apart. Promising a planned and orderly cityscape Juárez expands chaotically and disorderly, the city's resources stretched to an extent that outpaces the expansion of urban infrastructure. And it is mainly the city's working poor that is subject to violence, young women and men, predominantly from the disadvantaged South of the country. They were driven to Juárez in their thousands during the first ten years of NAFTA, in a bitter mix of neoliberal restructuring (e.g. the 1992 reform of Mexican agrarian law, rationalization of Mexico's public oil industry), natural disaster (e.g. repeated devastating floods in the coastal areas of rural Southern Mexico), a desire for a different life, and irresponsible promises of a better life from friends, family members, and also from media campaigns by the local Maquiladora Association (see Berndt 2004).

The people of Juárez have never submitted passively to the hegemonic narrative problematizing violence as originating with the other Juárez. Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua more generally are home to a vibrant community of NGOs, social movements and protest groups. It have been feminist activists who successfully challenged the prevailing representations of the violence against women, their accounts of *feminicidio* capturing worldwide attention (Wright, 2012). Since 1997 labor activists associated with Frente Auténtico del Trabajo (FAT), one of the few independent labor unions in Mexico, have provided spaces of organized solidarity in an extremely hostile environment (Berndt, 2004). And Lomas del Poleo residents have waged a tireless and stubborn struggle for attention, busting high profile visits of national or international politicians to gain the attention of the media, using the little legal means available to them in the Mexican juridical system, and resisting the violent dispossession as much as possible. All these

people fight for their place in Ciudad Juárez and they have enlisted the support of organizations and movements nationally and internationally.

Yet at the same time, these struggles find it difficult to escape the hegemonic logic. Female protesters represent themselves as "good" and "responsible" private women, countering but at the same time reproducing a discourse that blames the irresponsible public woman for the violence (Wright, 2012: 570). Likewise, residents in Lomas de Poleo are forced to represent themselves as "good" sedentary Juarez citizens, in so doing giving the narrative of the useless, fleeting migrant further force. If one adds to this that there is "little hope for 'victory' in Lomas del Poleo" (*Jim*, email communication, 10 April 2013), that there has been not a single incident where a truly independent labor union has successfully organized a major maquiladora in Juárez so far, and that the current revival of social life in the city owes much to the people's sheer will to survive and a certain exhaustion of outright violence, it is difficult not to be pessimistic.

5 Conclusion

Current representations of Ciudad Juárez as a city at war threaten a development model based on foreign direct investment and offshore production, not because the violence makes the maquilas economically less viable, but because reports about the violence tarnish Juarez' hard won reputation of a modern, advancing site in global supply chains. Trying hard to counter the image of a murder city with a positive rhetoric of investment opportunities, decision-makers sharply distance the maquiladora city from the violence. This apparently clear-cut and self-evident picture of two unrelated cities helps the MI to stabilize itself in the midst of violence and crisis, hiding from view the processes of dis/articulation that are necessary to naturalize this dualist representation and to keep the momentum of "economization through maquiladorization".

Geography plays a crucial role in this process. This concerns the ambivalent ordering work of spatial borders, seeing to it that the dis/articulations and dis/entanglements assume spatial form. In this paper I illustrated this at different geographical scales, starting with Lomas del Poleo and extending to the region and the wider urban agglomeration where impoverished *colonias populares* provide a sharp contrast to the industrial parks or to current binational development plans.

The boundary between modern and traditional, maquila and non-maquila, or north and south, however, does not simply exist as a natural fact. Rather it has to be practically

produced and reproduced by a distributed alliance of elements – by humans (e.g. US American managers, members of the Juárez comprador class, workers) as much as powerful ideas such as progress and modernization, or sociotechnologies such as supply chain management or human resource management. Just as in other places at the US-Mexican border, or indeed in any other location where the dream of progress and upgrading is realized with the help of export-oriented industrialization, this is how the maquiladora industry establishes itself as successful. In such an environment even outright violence appears as a legitimate, ultimate means towards achieving higher ends, as long as it is perceived as exceptional (e.g. Lomas del Poleo). Rather than doing away with social difference – the utopian promise of market-led development –, the various performative b/orderings stabilizing the maquiladorization project are deeply entangled with questions of social difference, involving the (re)production and mobilization of gradients of difference (gender, ethnicity, class) which are actively used by stronger actors to mobilize and immobilize flows of people, things and ideas.

In sum, it is a powerful interplay between articulation and disarticulation that makes possible the framing of plants, people or neighborhoods as being part of a world of modern production, commodity markets and global supply chains. At the same time however, these processes never fully succeed. In the often violent (re)production of Ciudad Juárez as a good place to invest in, maquila decision-makers perform the tricky role of border guards who profit from the very conditions they are at pains to distance themselves from and who involuntarily jeopardize the "locational advantages" that brought them to Juárez in doing so.

This is repeated during the current wave of violence. Maquila decision-makers maintain as large as possible a distance from and downplay the extent of the ongoing violence. Whatever remains from the violence is delegated to the backward, underdeveloped Mexico. What is more, the MI is even able to profit from the violence and the economic uncertainty. The current climate allows the maquila industry to strengthen its image as the only remaining hope for a better life in the city and to lay the blame for social inequality on the shoulders of drug cartels and incompetent state forces (Méndez, 2010: 37).

It is not far-fetched therefore to see the current period of violence and insecurity as an overflow of the processes of framing that give form to the maquiladoras as modern, first world production sites. What is crucial is that many of these entanglements are necessary for the smooth operation of transnational production networks. As long as these

overflows between inside and outside can be kept largely invisible and their irritating potential be contained they have a stabilizing effect.

In such an environment it is difficult indeed to imagine alternatives, and even more difficult to realize them. All this makes Juárez an exemplary case of how capitalism works in a world where markets dissolve into meandering supply and value chains, “shoring off” brackish tidelands that are rapidly yet invisibly articulated and disarticulated to global and local capital circuits.

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